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In what follows I want to say something about the cultural production of the future, and any such speculations will inevitably imply something about the histories of that cultural production that we may expect to accompany it (or indeed to follow it and to sum it up). But that is necessarily an exercise in futurology, and so you will not be surprised to find me shifting into a science-fictional mode. For the moment, let's remain in a sociological one.

Any talk about the future must first confront globalization as its absolute horizon: the term can have any number of synonyms. Marx called it universalization, but also the world market, a term that certainly remains useful for us today. As a stage in capitalism, I call it late, while others call it flexible or informational. And as a cultural formation, I have analyzed it as postmodernity, a term not everyone accepts, and even those who do are not necessarily in agreement—tending to limit its meaning to philosophies of relativism (if you dislike it) or of antiessentialism and antifoundationalism (if you greet it with enthusiasm). I'll come back to the postmodern later on.

Globalization can know its interpretive revisions as well: some call it, for example, Americanization, a characterization I understand but feel to be slightly misleading, as I'll try to show. Some think that it is nothing new, going all the way back to the neolithic trade routes. That's true, too, but I feel that it is more useful to insist on the historic originality of this stage, in which international relations become dominant rather than secondary or incidental. In fact, what we confront today is an immense international division of labor, which has certainly been anticipated at certain moments of the past, but has now become both universal and irreversible, with consequences for culture fully as much as for economics.

I've tried elsewhere to show that this new phenomenon must be grasped dialectically, or in other words as a union of opposites, as something that can be celebrated just as much as it can be greeted with dystopian fear and foreboding. Indeed, on the level of culture, globalization mostly has been greeted positively, as when we point to its immense new communicational and informational possibilities, and rejoice in the democratiza-

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tion of public opinion in a kind of utopia of blogging. The immense expansion of culture all over the world is then an event as momentous as the spreading conquest of literacy at an earlier stage in history. When, however, the question of culture darkens into the issues of whose culture, and of by whom and for whom, then globalization has begun to rotate toward its economic face, and a grimmer picture seems to emerge.[1]

I will dramatize that picture in terms of a remarkable new theory of the historical origins of state power by the sociologist Michael Mann: he calls the process "encagement," and it describes the way in which the first small power centers gradually drew their prepower neighbors—villages, tribes, nomads—into their own sphere of gravity. Many devolutions at first: a more egalitarian village seeks the help of the new cities in a military or ecological crisis, and then defects when the crisis has passed by. At length, however, the subsumption of all these "underdeveloped" entities into the more advanced power hierarchy of cities and despots, of priests and armies and laws, becomes irreversible: and it this irreversibility of the new and larger imperial system that Mann describes (following Weber) as the construction of a larger cage, as a more definitive encagement.[2]

The new global division of labor is a little like that: at first it is useful for certain countries to specialize—monocrops or mineral wealth; countries without oil or sugar or cotton can benefit from these resources, without it being at first apparent that the new systems have been imposed on the colonies in question from the outside, by the imperial powers. Today, however, when self-sufficiency is a thing of the past, and when no single country, no matter what its fertility, any longer feeds itself, it becomes a little clearer what irreversibility means. You cannot opt out of the international division of labor any longer, even when it means the flight of industries and the loss of jobs. There is no longer any delinking from the free market system (to use Samir Amin's suggestive term);[3] or at any rate we do not yet quite know what it would mean for a whole region of the globe to try to secede: a new war of secession perhaps? At any rate, such liberation scarcely seems imaginable for individual countries, even the biggest ones.

Such is the dystopian side of globalization, in which the minor key of universal encagement echoes the major of some utopian vision of universal communication and of global culture. To be sure, these tonalities—negative and positive, somber and bright, depressing and joyous—can also be reversed: thus the free marketers revel in the utopian benefits of their system, when applied in as many countries of the globe as possible, while gloomy leftists brood over the dismal prospects of a universal commodification of culture.

Indeed, it is probably the second of these perspectives that should concern us here, as it bears very much on the situation and the future

of literature and culture in general. The cultural critique of globalization has, to be sure, several levels: and the first can appropriately be described as the economic level of culture, or in other words the critique of some new global culture industry (to readapt Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's old term for Hollywood). The obvious question—why does it sometimes seem as though the entire world had become addicted to Hollywood action films? does this addiction not confirm the hegemonic U.S. position that all of human history was moving teleologically toward that final form of human nature that is the American consumer?—this first and obvious question is by no means the most interesting one. It would be a little less superficial or ideological, perhaps, to examine all this from the standpoint of the canon. For was not the postmodern liberation from modernism grasped first and foremost as the liberation from the modernist canon, which is to say from the Eurocentric or Western canon of masterpieces that culminated teleologically . . . in what exactly? In expressionism, if not in pop art? In the Beatles, if not in jazz? In an international or jetset magic realism, if not in Faulkner? The new freedoms that postmodernity brought with it were in fact associated with this new artistic relativism, with the destruction of the Western canon and the eruption of all kinds of local and non-Western arts and expressions onto the historical scene, and felt as a decisive liberation by all kinds of non-Western artists and cultural workers.

But this is the point at which economic globalization intervenes. Those of us concerned with books will only feel this as the new world monopoly stage of publishing, where the smaller national publishers are absorbed into gigantic German or Spanish publishing empires, themselves on the point of being swallowed up by still larger oil companies or media trusts. Still, these economic institutions not only impose their textbooks on the youth of a nation, they also dictate the canonization of literary texts on the basis of what they leave in print or make unavailable; and those of us who write introductions to those texts are bound to feel some complicity with the process.

All the more is this true of galleries and museums, the art markets today, who determine what counts as art and are in a position to select what we can see and know of artistic production elsewhere in the world. Globalization still determines a center; and if the pull of gravity of American cultural consumers' goods is an immense force—even in politics, where I suspect it was not for nothing in the end of the regimes in Western Europe and Russia—it may also be said that there is still, in many parts of the world, the instinctive desire to be read by the West and in particular in the United States and in the English language: to be read and to be seen and observed by this particular Big Other.

This very asymmetry or imbalance may now allow us to move on to a less basely materialistic dimension of cultural globalization, which has indeed to do with the fear of universal standardization. Universal commodification, Marx would have called it, and it is indeed a feature in his conception of the world market implicit in capitalism from the outset, the reorganization of everything in terms of money, the replacement of all earlier forms of global activity, forced and unforced, by wage labor, the reification and commodification of everything from art to feelings, from nature to social relations: everything is reified, and reified irrevocably—no return possible to the old, natural, prehuman or nonhuman things and states of affairs, only a headlong momentum and *fuite en avant* toward what Rem Koolhaas might call a generic culture.

The themes in terms of which we might characterize such a generic culture are as varied as the diagnoses they imply. I think it is fair to say that where this trend and this transformation is feared, it is generally described in terms of standardization and as the obliteration of local cultures; and beyond that, perhaps, as Americanization, a characterization long associated with modernity and modernization (particularly in the Europe of the 1920s). What can be misleading about this attribution is the emergence all over the world of what might then be called a properly generic "American culture," in the form of music and television, shopping malls and nightclubs, fashions and public opinion polls, to which we may add that American transnationals are far from being the only players in the field (but we are here, to be sure, talking about daily life rather than about ownership and production).

I take the occasion (the topic of Americanization) to point out some peculiarities of the structure of globalization, and in particular that it is a decentered system that has a center. Modern information technology (as well as the rhetoric of democracy and self-determination) creates a situation in which all the countries of the world are in principle and tendentially equal; and yet one of those equal and decentered countries—sometimes called "the last superpower," a phrase that has about it something of the nostalgic overtones of expressions like "the former Yugoslavia"—is primus inter pares and de facto policeman of the world. If you want to use the terminology of nation-states, it might be better to say of the United States that it is uniquely not a nation-state like those entities among which it functions, but a different kind of animal, something on the order of Alexandre Kojève's universal and homogenous empire, perhaps.

Of the various peculiarities that stem from this situation, we do not need to insist on the blindness of the center, on the palpable disinterest of the Americans in anything going on around them in the outside world; unless we dialectically link this phenomenon to the considerable

interest of that outside world in America, as it were that Lacanian object of desire and envy that I have already touched on. Then too we must mention another significant feature of international relations that is often overlooked, namely that these are almost never unmediated, but that they pass through the indirection of the medium of culture itself. Politically and ideologically, this often involves the changing of the valences of a term or value as it passes from one sealed pressure chamber to another: Roberto Schwarz offers an extraordinary analysis of the way in which ideas are inverted on their way from metropolis to colony or periphery.[4] Even more striking is the inversion of political ideologies, as when the revolutionary sansculottes of the French Revolution became the racist counterrevolutionaries of the Haitian one.[5]

But I want above all to underscore the phenomenon of influence or imitation, concepts that have had a dismal effect on our own discipline (of comparative literature) insofar as they simplify a very complex process, namely the way in which an event, a text, a concept, in a distant and sometimes utterly marginal land, can suddenly open up new possibilities in a domestic situation in which such possibilities had been hitherto literally unthinkable and unimaginable. We may say that the immense worldwide influence of Faulkner was of this kind, whose work suddenly showed writers all over the world that you could do something else with land, deep memory, defeat, and historical passion. Or if you dared, you might even want to show how the Soviet Union, for all its multitudinous flaws, opened wholly unsuspected possibilities for distant populations all around the world who had never seen a Russian or even heard of the labor theory of value.

But the problem we have with thinking this kind of action at a distance lies in the dangers of culturalism: for although I found myself using that word for purposes of demonstration, it is precisely not culture at all that is at issue here, but rather uneven development and the very nature of the world system. If you want to have an even more paradoxical formulation, let's put it this way: we can complain about the leveling and disappearance of local and national cultures, but we must never do so in the name of cultural difference, cultural pluralism, or multicultural tolerance—these uses of the culture words are preeminently ideological and tempt us down all the wrong paths. In globalization, there are no cultures, but only the nostalgic images of national cultures: in postmodernity we cannot appeal back to the fetish of national culture and cultural authenticity. Our object of study is rather Disneyfication, the production of simulacra of national cultures; and tourism, the industry that organizes the consumption of those simulacra and those spectacles or images.

This is why we by no means want to construe our discipline in terms of world culture, or of a misunderstanding of Goethe's notion of world

literature as the canon or imaginary museum of all the masterpieces of history. In fact, what Goethe presciently had in mind was very much an informational or communicational concept: world literature did not mean for him Lord Byron or Rumi or the Shakuntala (all three of which he admired), but rather the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Revue des deux mondes* or *Le Globe*. World literature appears when the various national situations are able to speak to each other about the specificities of their worlds and their textual productions; it is not some level playing field in which all the writers, in whatever languages, have an equal shot at the university curriculum and the bestseller list, at the Nobel Prize or television celebrity on CNN.

In fact, to do that, they would have to write in English (many of them do, of course), and it is worthwhile pausing on this, yet another symptom of that dissymmetry of globalization that I evoked a moment ago. For we are all placed in a peculiar position by the promotion of English to the world's lingua franca and however this process marginalizes the other languages—people have told me about the unwanted effects of English sentence structure on both Chinese and Latin-American Spanish today—it does not do us any good either. For English is now a business language and—to the degree to which war is itself a business—the language of power and of warfare. It seems, also, owing to the economic brain drain, the language of science as well, but science as the handmaid of business and profit—applied science—and no longer the great speculative and disinterested practice of pure or theoretical science that obtained in an earlier modernity. To be sure, there have always been a number of distinct English languages: the Irish have one, Indian English is one of the official languages of India, and American English has also known its great moments, in Whitman or Hart Crane, in Faulkner or Dick or Pynchon. But globalization has leveled this language out and reduced it to its least common denominator, to a basic English of the free market, of which Mallarmé might have said that if all you want to do is to communicate, you have only to pass a coin silently from one hand to the other.

The name of Mallarmé, to be sure, does suggest that it was from out of just such linguistic degradation and commercialization or reification that the great modernist projects emerged and tried "to purify the language of the tribe." But this was the great quest and the great mirage of the modernist period, which is no longer with us. In postmodernity, the poets and writers create garbage installations out of their language and revel in its broken pieces (as with the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets); they scarcely dream of the revival of an authentic or utopian language any more, even in the other language zones where it might still be possible.

But now, as we begin to evoke the novelties of contemporary artistic or cultural production, it is perhaps appropriate to switch to science fic-

tion and one of its greatest practitioners, in order to imagine what the literary and cultural history of that future period might be like. We may indeed take as a useful fable one of the innovations of the great Polish novelist Stanisław Lem, who, alongside his own voluminous treatises on future technology (in particular, cybernetic technologies), also began to compose reviews of imaginary books, ultimately filling three volumes of these actually existing articles on fictitious works from the future.[6] As far as I know, he did not include an imaginary history of literature—a history of imaginary literature?—among these documents, which for him constituted a representational solution to the problem of incorporating his scientific and speculative thoughts into a narrative medium otherwise recalcitrant to them.

But we can readily see how an imaginary history of future literary texts would raise the ante a good deal: for it would presuppose the imagining, not of one book, but of a whole series of books, and indeed of books radically different enough from each other to allow the plotting of an unexpected evolutionary or nonevolutionary curve; and would also betray the persistence, if insufficiently imagined and radicalized, of current stereotypes of literary history, or of a canonical series of "great" books or masterpieces of the future.

At this point, we begin to remember that most utopias, if they take the time at all to describe the reading material of their inhabitants, are rather weak and unimaginative in their accounts of the utopian literary canon. Edward Bellamy does have the courage to invent a novel called *Penthesilia*, the greatest work of the next century (in his case, the twentieth), and even to confess his disappointment with it; but he was not much as a novelist himself and one wonders what shape such a projection might have taken in the hands of a more gifted stylist. One wonders that, until one also remembers Ernst Bloch's classic essay on the artist novel, in which the protagonist's masterpiece is always something like a black hole at the center of the book we are reading, a blank spot or empty space we are obliged to take on faith, since neither the reader nor the novelist seems capable of imagining it concretely. For Bloch, to be sure, this blind spot was the space of the not-yet, of the utopian future, in which all the thronging contingencies of being and of the real present are momentarily held at bay and suspended, and another logic summoned into a shimmering spectral life just beyond our reach.

Is this so, as F. R. Leavis might have asked? And are all imaginary works within the work such empty portals onto the void and the unimaginable? There are the imaginary works in Proust, in literature, painting, and music: to those we supply our own references, to Monet and perhaps to Debussy rather than the seemingly historical model, Saint-Saëns. There is Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*; but apparently its compositions were

already composed in advance, at least in the abstract, by Adorno. But if the writer was able to imagine them with enough energy and satisfaction, why should he not have gone on to write the books himself, rather than to attribute them to some fictive surrogate? George Steiner has just written a book about the seven books he will no longer have the time to write; having done so, he will probably live to be ninety and yet write none of those, having already dispatched them in a different mode of being.[7]

What seems more feasible, indeed, and what has at least more successfully marked our own literary tradition, is the fictive account of works that failed, and that have failed not because the artist in question lacked talent, but because the demands he made on himself and on art were too great and too absolute. The paradigm of this genre, if you want to call it that, is obviously enough Balzac's *Le Chef d'oeuvre inconnu*, in which one of the greatest future painters in the Western canon, the young Nicholas Poussin, contemplates the life and work of one far greater than he. (The analogue is to be found in Zola's *L'Oeuvre*, in which the champion of Manet and Courbet offers a tragic caricature of that childhood friend whose radical innovations he was himself unable to grasp.)

So perhaps, if a literary history of future masterpieces is beyond the bounds of realization, a history of literary or artistic failures might actually be more feasible, an account of the limits of representation encountered in successive onslaughts on the Absolute, each one of which might be expected to push those limits back infinitesimally, but whose collective drama would consist in the cumulative articulation of the very limits of art itself, or of language, or of mimesis or representation, of narrative as such. Roland Barthes's writing degree zero, Adorno's philosophy of modern music, even Clement Greenberg's early call for an art divested of its representational content, might serve as examples of this negative history. Yet such projects also seem inseparable from an essentially modernist conception of art and perhaps from a modernist conception of history and historiography as well.

Yet such science-fictional speculations about a future literary or artistic history make at least one feature of the problem inescapable, namely, that the possibility of a history is inseparable from the way in which the object of that history is constituted. If the object of a literary history is construed as the individual work (or masterwork), then a very different narrative will have to be invented than the one that is likely to obtain if that object is constructed as a set of movements, or schools, or even styles. Indeed, we may hazard the guess that the value of such a history today and in the future will be not so much to serve as a handbook or checklist of facts, so much as a vehicle for increasing reflexivity about the constructedness of both the object and the text that purports to be its history. And at that point the infamous relativism of the postmodern—that

apparent development that has terrorized so many believers in truth and reality—takes on a new appearance. For relativism in this sense simply means the multiplicity of possible narratives, possible histories, that accompanies the multiplicity of ways of constructing the object of those narratives or histories. Now the more the merrier, and our chances of approximating some kind of historical Real or historical truth increase asymptotically with the very number of ways in which we can construe or construct that object. I'll come back to all this in a moment.

This matter of the construction of the object, however, also clarifies the usefulness, to literary history proper, of artistic histories from other domains, from the visual arts, for example, or from music. For they are distant enough from the verbal artifacts with which we work to be preeminently suggestive of new possibilities of construing our own objects: histories of color, of perspective, of musical instruments—all these topics, with their peculiar conjunctures and reversals, help us break out of the old problems of irony or point of view, of *style indirect libre* or thematic imagery, and propose new stories to be told, new kinds of histories to be constructed. Such breakthroughs might be comparable to what Foucault was able to achieve with that tired old genre, the "history of ideas," with which he was so embarrassed to be identified. For his strange constructs were themselves like the bricolage of a sculptor's studio: it was not so much that he gave us a clearer view of historical reality as that he showed us how the historian could be engaged in all kinds of new operations, not merely discovering and incorporating new kinds of documents, but also incorporating new materials and forgotten objects, like the panopticon or the ship of fools, and organizing new stories and narratives around them. (Indeed, it seems to me quite misguided to think that Foucault had new ideas about power or sovereignty or whatever; better to think of him as a kind of inventor rather than a kind of thinker.) At any rate, it seems possible minimally to characterize these new intellectual constructions as conceptualities in which one or several material objects are embedded.

With such a characterization, we can now begin to move in the direction of a new description of the art object in general, or rather the new kinds of installations in which a "textual" process is immobilized in the current worldwide proliferation of postmodern artistic production. I'm trying to avoid the word "object," still redolent of a modernist production of individual things, whether canvasses, scores that can be performed or repeated, or books that have boundaries and limits and that can be held in the memory (as opposed to those texts that, whether by fragmentation and imperfection or by a dizzying multiplication of presences on the page, somehow evade form and reification—I guess I'm thinking of David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*). It would be convenient to take the

installation as the most useful form of this new paradigm; but I also want to try to catch the spirit of so much of contemporary or postmodern visual art that is generated by a single bright idea that, combining form and content, can be repeated ad infinitum until the artist's name takes on a kind of content of its own. Thus Xu Bing conceived the idea of making up conjunctures of lines or strokes that looked like real Chinese characters but were utterly without meaning: we might think of nonsense words or even *zaum* or Velimir Khlebnikov's made-up language, yet these Western phenomena really have no equivalent for the visual dimension of the Chinese system. This was thus a remarkable conception or *Einfall*, a discovery of genius, if you like—provided it is understood that it constitutes neither a formal innovation, nor the elaboration of a style, nor is it autoreferential in the modernist sense or even aesthetic in the sense of altering or estranging perception or intensifying it. The question that interests me is whether we can call this art "conceptual" in a now older and henceforth more traditional sense. I understand conceptual art as the production of physical objects that flex mental categories by pitting them against each other, as with Hegel's "determinations of reflexion" in the *Logic*. Yet these categories, whether we can express them or not, are somehow universal forms like Kant's categories or Hegel's moments; and conceptual objects are therefore a little like antinomies or paradoxes in the verbal-philosophical realm—occasions for a meditative practice.

With Xu Bing, and the rest of a postmodern artistic production for which I take him to be paradigmatic, it seems to me that the situation is wholly different. His "texts" are, as it were, soaked in theory; they are as theoretical as they are visual, but they do not illustrate an idea, nor do they offer material for a meditation or a mental or conceptual exercise. A concept is there, but it is singular, and this conceptual art is nominalistic rather than universal. I want to recall an encounter I found suggestive: asking a younger artist whether anyone still copied the Old Masters, as Picasso did, or Jackson Pollock, I received the following response: "No, we get our ideas from theory, from reading Baudrillard or Deleuze or whoever." "Getting our ideas": I want to use this expression to drive home my point here, namely that when we look at works of this kind, we are engaged in a theoretical process; that is, what we "consume" is no longer a purely visual or material entity, but rather the *idea* of such an entity. What the artists now create is not the "work" in whatever older or newer sense, but rather the idea of the work.

This puts us in a somewhat different situation than that well known to all teachers and critics of film and literature, namely the problem posed by memory of the text. The advantage of the poem—or at least the short poem—over the novel is that, even if students have read through the latter the night before, it cannot be fully and concretely present to

their imagination as such. Nor does *explication de texte* solve this dilemma of overall narrative form, although it constitutes its object of study in a rather different way. Even films that have been seen as recently as last week are not available in any usable immediacy, and the tried-and-true second-best of the plot summary, even when it points out features that no one has noticed, is scarcely a solution to this ontological issue of the status of the work in time itself.

But what would a plot summary of *Infinite Jest* do for us, and how to take a bird's-eye view of one of Xu Bing's scrolls? But perhaps this historical development, this mutation in cultural production in postmodernity, is more damaging for *explication de texte* than for the study of plot and larger form: microcriticism becoming even more problematic than macrocriticism. Neither, clearly, allows us to capture the logic of the process that the new works seem to incorporate. The formal developments I have just outlined now offer an unexpected solution to this dilemma, which is, in my opinion, obscured by a rather twentieth-century insistence on, and even obsession with, the term *process* as such.

Let's rather imagine that these newer works, or "texts" as it is more appropriate to call them, are mixtures of theory and singularity, which is to say that in some fashion they transcend the old opposition between a work and its criticism or interpretation that held for an aesthetic committed to the concept of the work in general, and to the security of closure and of reified form. Now that opposition—between the critic and the creator, the artist and the review—an opposition over which so much bad blood has been spilled at least since the eighteenth century—is no longer binding; and the critic has been transformed, has mutated, into something like the curator, or has indeed become indistinguishable from the writer himself. Lem's imaginary book reviews in short: are they the work of a creator or a critic? And have we not now begun to enter a new and untheorized situation in which the forming of the idea of the work has replaced the working out, the working through, of the work itself, just as the production of the new idea has replaced the old-fashioned judgment and criticism of that older, fully realized work? Much was fantasized in the 1960s and 1970s about the promotion of critic to creator—a fantasy of intellectuals entering their new status in the university, and losing their old sociopolitical one, whose loss is then partially compensated by this rather megalomaniac dream of the Text that blurs all the boundaries between literature and what are essentially its book reviews. The moment of truth in this self-serving and narcissistic fantasy lies surely in the transformation of both in postmodernity.

Now, two new things become possible for the erstwhile critic on his way to reincarnation as a real artist (a new Pinocchio syndrome perhaps). The first is the invention of new texts, rather on the order of what Malraux

described for photography: you enlarge a piece of Scythian jewelry to the point at which it becomes the equal of a monumental frieze in another civilization. The critic, then, by the invention of new nomenclature and neologism, and by the framing in a new paradigm of aesthetic or cultural history, transforms an inert text of some sort into a bearer of new form and new perception and thereby transforms it into an object of especial and hitherto untheorized significance. That text then becomes a first of some kind, and itself a paradigm and model of things to come, as well as a privileged symptom of Zeitgeist.

Meanwhile that creation—in which the new significance of the curatorial role can be identified, precisely as just such a framing of objects that are to be allegorically transvalued—is intimately related to the other one that interests us here, namely the invention of wholly new historical stories about such objects—the creation of new ideas or concepts of literary or artistic history.

This is then why, in my opinion, we cannot exactly write new literary histories today, we cannot execute them in the way the older framers of projects (artistic or not) then patiently brought these first glimmering ideas to full realization step-by-step and in concrete detail. For such new ideas are not to be realized, they are and remain purely theoretical, the task is to spring them onto the screen of consciousness precisely as new ideas for this or that new narrative paradigm of history. What the writers of new literary history have to do today is to invent new ideas of literary history, to pursue the goal of a *Novum* that is immediately recognizable as something hitherto unthought about the process, and whose examples are not pieces and segments of the execution of that research so much as themselves ideas that dramatize what such an execution would look like. In other words, they try to show us what a carrying out of this new idea of literary or artistic history would look like if it really could be carried out (which it can't be).

Now I have little enough time to say why this is not relativism or fiction. It must be marked by an imperative to multiplicity—to invent one new idea for literary history must be understood as calling for many more. These then begin to stake out the bounds of the Real, they approach it asymptotically in their very variety and in their contradictions, like the legendary blind men feeling the equally imaginary elephant's sensory properties—tail, trunk, hide, tusks, and so forth—and reporting back on their contradictory findings. This is then the triangulation of the Real, the identification of a heavy yet invisible body at the heart of space that moves all the counters and the pointers on all the dials of the universe in a barely perceptible yet inescapable way, a fluttering and a fluctuation through which the Real becomes as inescapable as it is unrepresentable.

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NOTES

1 See my "Globalization as a Philosophical Issue," in *Valences of the Dialectic* (New York: Verso, forthcoming).
2 Michael Mann, *Sources of Social Power*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986).
3 Samir Amin, *Delinking: Towards a Polycentric World*, trans. Michael Wolfers (London: Zed Books, 1990).
4 Roberto Schwarz, *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture* (New York: Verso, 1992).
5 C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (New York: Vintage, 1989).
6 Stanisław Lem, *Mortal Engines* (New York: Seabury, 1977); *Imaginary Magnitudes* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984); *One Human Minute* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986).
7 George Steiner, *My Unwritten Books* (New York: New Directions, 2008).